

United States Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Washington Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

August 7, 2006

Introduction:

The United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA) has prepared a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) to evaluate the environmental consequences associated with the proposed implementation of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) agreement for the State of Washington. Under this agreement, approximately 100,000 acres of eligible annual and perennial cropland currently in crop production in 27 designated counties would be enrolled and enhanced through implementation of approved conservation practices. The goal of this agreement is to improve water quality and assist in the recovery of threatened or endangered salmonids.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Commodity Credit Corporation (USDA/CCC) and the State of Washington have agreed to implement the Washington Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), a component of the national Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). USDA provided the statutory authority by the provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended (16 U.S.C. 3830 et seq.), and the regulations at 7 CFR 1410. In accordance with the 1985 Act, USDA/CCC is authorized to enroll lands through December 31, 2007.

Preferred Alternative:

The preferred alternative is also the proposed action alternative. This alternative will establish the CREP Agreement between FSA and the State of Washington through 2007. The proposal focuses on enrolling up to 100,000 acres of eligible annual and perennial cropland currently in crop production in 27 designated counties. Under this agreement, three approved conservation practices: riparian habitat restoration, filter strips, and hedgerows will be implemented. The goal of this agreement is to improve water quality and assist in the recovery of threatened or endangered salmonids.

Reasons for Finding of No Significant Impact:

In consideration of the analysis documented in the PEA and the reasons outlined in this FONSI, the preferred alternative would not constitute a major State or Federal action that would significantly affect the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. The determination is based on the following:

1. Both beneficial and adverse impacts of implementing the preferred alternative have been fully considered within the PEA. The beneficial impacts outweigh any adverse impacts. Adverse

cumulative impacts are expected to be minor as implementation of the preferred alternative will cause very little if any adverse impact on the area of potential effect and the human environment.

2. The preferred alternative would not significantly affect public health or safety. Implementation of the preferred alternative would improve water quality in 27 counties.
3. The preferred alternative would not significantly affect any unique characteristics which includes historic and cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.
4. The preferred alternative does not involve effects to the quality of the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial.
5. The preferred alternative would not impose highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The preferred alternative would not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The intended outcome of the preferred alternative is to reduce nutrient loading and improve water quality and wildlife habitat. Any future projects that are similar in nature will need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine their individual potential for impacts on the human environment.
7. The preferred alternative is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant impacts. The Cumulative Effects section of the PEA discusses potential cumulative impacts of implementing the preferred alternative. Cumulative impacts of implementing the preferred alternative were determined to not be significant.
8. The preferred alternative would not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office was completed. Tribes that have been a part of this consultation process to date include the Nooksack, Lummi, Yakama, Spokane, and Nez Perce.
9. The preferred alternative would not have adverse effects on threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat. The preferred alternative is designed to improve conditions for federally threatened and endangered salmonid species in Washington. In accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the effects of implementing the preferred alternative on threatened and endangered species and designated critical habitat were addressed in the PEA. Informal consultation with the U.S. Fish Wildlife Service was completed.
10. The preferred alternative does not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Determination:

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and FSA's Environmental regulations at 7 CFR part 799 implementing the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality, 40 CFR parts 1500-1508, I find that neither the proposed action nor any of the alternatives is a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, no environmental impact statement will be prepared.

APPROVED:

Signature

Date (*MM-DD-YYY*)

Name (*Typed or Printed*)

Title

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